Our 2018 Research Agenda

As we look ahead to another year of what will undoubtedly be fast-paced technology-driven change, there has been much discussion in the LEF offices regarding our 2018 research and events programme. Having listened attentively to our clients (as we always do) and observed the wider world, it's clear that a blend of thought leadership and pragmatic advice remains essential. We consistently hear that bringing structure to the unknown and the poorly defined is one of the main ways we bring value to our clients. Such practical *sense-making* helps clients prepare for the challenges, opportunities and uncertainties ahead.

So it is with *platforms*. For decades, the leading edge in the technology sector has been grounded in a platform-based approach, with one digital innovation built upon another to enable continual improvement and evolution. But today, as business and IT increasingly converge, even traditional enterprises must adopt platform thinking – and its associated designs and economics – as they seek to become 'digital-first' organizations.

It's our view that the combination of serverless architectures, 'edge' devices and the intelligent, pervasive digital infrastructure that we have dubbed *the Matrix,* is now changing our industry's underlying platforms once again. We believe this so strongly that we have decided to make these issues the over-riding theme of our 2018 research, as we seek to help clients better understand and take advantage of the technology dynamics of the 2020s and beyond.

Research Projects

Building on our platform thinking as well as the rich vein of research completed in 2017, the following projects are now in various stages of motion:

Q1 Mastering Platform Businesses

Mastering Platform Businesses by Bill Murray will cover the opportunities and challenges presented by the 'platform economy', including best and next practices in today's leading platform businesses and ecosystems, as well as the journey traditional companies and government agencies must take to become platform-based organizations.

Q2 The Shift to the Human Platform

The Shift to the Human Platform by Lewis Richards will focus on the impact of platform businesses and digital platforms (they're not the same thing!) on us, as individuals and as members of communities. We will assess the talent and skills needed to thrive in a world featuring new interfaces, wearables, implants, personal data and biometrics, and where 'everything is a function.'

Q3 Why the fuss about serverless?

Why the fuss about serverless? by Simon Wardley will explain why 'serverless' is not just going to change the way we design applications, but will also enable the emergence of entirely new players, ecosystems and value chains, with all the threats and opportunities this implies – for business and governments, and new and traditional enterprises alike.

Q4 The Post-Cloud Landscape

The Post-Cloud Landscape by Glen Robinson will take a deep technology dive to show how centralized public cloud architectures are already becoming the new legacy, and how the impact of 'the edge' is turning everything on its head. Platform architectures are now forming like ever-increasing concentric circles around the 'drop in the ocean' that is today's cloud services. This report will help you develop a *Matrix mindset,* and give you the understanding needed to navigate this next big stage of platform evolution.

Advisory

In order to bring this research to life, all of our advisory offerings will be aligned with this agenda. For example, our *21st Century Human* programme continues to prove a very effective process for developing and embedding the digital skills needed by the modern workforce, and this need will only increase as digital innovation shifts to *the human platform*. Similarly, *Wardley Mapping* remains a unique and powerful methodology for visualizing where your organization is today and where it needs to be, and we are excited to see how the serverless world can be successfully mapped.

Of course, we also want to leverage all of our 2017 work, especially by applying the tools and frameworks developed in the *Renaissance of IT* report. Many clients have found this research to be a useful way of thinking about how to reinvent their IT organization to remain relevant in a Matrix-driven future. Likewise, our popular *Business Relationship Management (BRM)* practice will continue to emphasize *Digital Business Leadership* at the very front of the firm, as many traditional back-office functions are commoditized.

Events

As ever, we will support the delivery of our research and advisory portfolio through a series of events. Our sold-out Study Tours and regional Executive Forums will continue to be the highlights of our events agenda, complemented by a series of more intimate regional dinners, breakfasts and other get-togethers with individual LEF team members. We encourage you to attend as many of the events below as you can.

- In April, we will return to Seattle and Silicon Valley for our *Building the Digital Platform* Study Tour. This tour will showcase a range of organizations playing in the platform space, with a specific focus on leveraging IoT and Machine Intelligence to generate business value.

- In May, our North American Executive Forums will come to New York and Chicago, with an agenda that further explores the renaissance of the IT organization, while lifting the lid on the findings of our *Mastering Platform Businesses* research and providing a glimpse into the future of *Seeing Digital* (see below.)

- In September, our Study Tour will dive deeper into *The Human as a Platform*. Over the course of the 2020s, technology will be increasingly used to help us better understand our thinking, emotions, health, performance and much more, raising new and fundamental questions for leaders and employees alike.

- In October, we will see the second annual *Mapcamp* in London, after last year's sell-out debut. This day-long session is a tremendous opportunity for new and experienced mappers alike to learn directly from both Simon Wardley and other leaders of the growing mapping community.

- Finally, in November our flagship Executive Forum will take place in London, bringing together all of this year's work in one information-rich, day-long event.

Further details of all of the above can be found here.

In addition

During 2018, clients will also see increased LEF coverage of what's going on in Asia, as the challenge from China becomes increasingly important in many digital domains. We are keen to gauge the level of client interest in this topic – especially since we plan to conduct our first Study Tour to China in early 2019.

A final 2018 highlight will be the much-anticipated publication of a book by LEF Research Fellow David Moschella. *Seeing Digital* will bring together much of David's and LEF's work from the last few years, gathering the Matrix, Machine Intelligence, Industry Disruption, Co-creation, Outside-in and related topics into an easily understood visual narrative that forecasts the digital world of the 2020s. We look forward to sharing this with our clients soon.

Please contact your local LEF representative with questions regarding any of these or our other plans. We wish you a successful 2018 and look forward to seeing you all soon.

David Reid, LEF Programme Director

LEADING EDGE FORUM